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ABSTRACT

Many suggestions can be made, which, if put into practice, can help students learn more and earn better grades. Some study habits that relate to study efficiency are: selecting ideal study time; adjusting surroundings; length of time for each study session; the way to go about reading; and the way students take notes. Probably the single most important technique is to study and review at regular and frequent intervals. As students continue their education, one of the most important activities that must occupy their time is silent reading. To take good notes, a student should be aware of and consciously practice some fundamental principles: focus attention on the lecturer; make notes brief; learn to be exact; and listen for learning. In preparing for exams, students should not "cram," but should: practice the kind of thinking they will be doing during the test; space their reviews; and review tests that have been returned to them. In taking exams, students should: be on time; read test instructions carefully; budget their time; and do the easier questions first. In the final analysis, study results depend on how well, not how long, students study. (RS)

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How To Study - EFFICIENTLY !

"The first step in any attempt at remedying a problem is the courage to recognize it as a problem, followed by a commitment to change."
- Lewis B. Mayhew
Former Professor of
Education: Stanford University

Are you going to college, technical school, or a job where you will be 'learning-through-reading' ? Most high school seniors do. In 'learning-through-reading' there are no magic formulas that will automatically solve study problems. However - there are some suggestions which, if put into practice, can help you learn more and earn better grades - if you are really willing to work !

Continuing beyond high school should be considered a sound investment. True, the cost is considerable; in time, in effort, and in money. Reasonable persons expect a fair return on their 'investments'. As a reading-learner, you get a fair return on your investment OnLy when you study, or more precisely, when you study efficiently.

How to Study Quiz

How well do you understand some of the problems relating to studying ? Your answers to the following statements will give you some practical clues. Encirle the T or Fbelow according to h ow you feel or what you believe. Then check your answers with those listed at the end of this document:

T F 1. Word-for-word memorizing should never be used in studying.

T F 2. Mere repetition does not guarantee learning.

T F 3. It is better to distribut practice over a period of time than to try to learn everything in one period.

T F 4. Some people naturally have poor memories and therefore cannot get good grades.

T F 5. In making notes from textbooks, it is better to write them in your own words than to copy down exact quotations.

T F 6. Following a carefully planned schedule may give a student more free time for other things.

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T F 7. As time goes on, we forget more and more rapidly what we have learned.

T F 8. The commonest cause of failure in schoolwork is lack of mental ability.

T F 9. Your speed of reading should be adjusted to the kind of material you are studying.

T F 10. Make the place where you study a pleasant as well as relaxing spot as possible.

A:- CONDITIONS FOR LEARNING

Much has been written about "the learning climate". You have undoubtedly discovered certain factors which facilitate learning. Perhas the following suggestions will also prove helpful:

1. Study when you are physically alert.
2. Establish a routine time schedule for study.
3. Secure your physical comfort, such as an acceptable chair; good lighting.
4. Collect all necessary aids; pen, pencil, paper, dictionary, study aids.
5. Reduce disturbances to a minimum.
6. Set a definite goal for the designated study period.
7. Survey the complete assignment.
8. Break it into units or tasks.
9. Overlearn so that retention can be encouraged through repetition.
10. Break your study period when you become fatigued or reach an unproductive plateau.

1- Study Habits

In order to become more efficient in our behavior we develop routine ways of reacting, to accomplish the things we do. These are called habits, and they cause us to function more smoothly.

If you can develop and maintain certain study habits your scholastic load can be considerably lightened. Some of these that relate to study efficiency are:

(1) Time when you study.

(2) The adjusting of your surroundings.

(3) The length of time for each study session.

(4) The way you go about reading, and

(5) The way you take notes.

The great American psychologist, William James, is noted for his famous principles on habit function. These are:

(1) Make an assertion of will.
(2) Make an emphatic start.
(3) Never permit an exception to occur.
(4) Seize every opportunity to act upon your resolution.

As you reread these principles, note how very much of the 'personal' element is involved. It is you that must do the resolving, asserting, and continuing. It takes your determination - that final ounce of self-assertion - to do what you ought to do. Be a self-starter !

2- Study Procedures

The following study procedures have been suggested by one of the national scholastic honor societies. By observing each of these procedures you approach one step nearer to efficient study habits:

(I) Motivation

A. The prerequisite to all learning is - the desire to learn.

B. There is a direct positive correlation between learning and the individual's "involvment" in the process.

(II) Study Schedule

A. Set time for study - budget time.

B. Set place for study; quiet, no distractions.

C. Short, frequent study periods are most effective.

(III) Reading Techniques

A. Skim through table of contents.

B. Read summary chapters FURST !

C. Read topic, paragraph, and sub-headings.

D. Concentrate on the ideas presented.

E. Write down items you consider important or don't understand.

F. Keep up-to-date on reading assignments.

G. Read related outside materials.

H. Question yourself on principal ideas.

I. Review material
(1) Immediately after the lecture.
(2) Short time before examinations.

(3) One or two times between (1) and (2) above.
(4) NEVER "cram" immediately before an examination.
(5) Rewrite definitions, ideas, comparisons, critiques.

(IV) Note-taking Techniques

A. Organize notes.
(1) Identify main points.
(2) Condense wording.

B. Review lecture notes.

C. Keep notes in neat order for reference.

D. Re-write notes as soon after leacture as possible.

(V) Examinations

A. Be prepared.
(1) Keep assignments up-to-date.
(2) Review regularly.

B. Don't take too much time on one question; budget time.

C. In essay exams, organize material BEFORE writing.

D. Know what the instructor wants.

3. Yes, you can improve !

Learning, like other skilss, can be more effective when established principls are practiced. The well-known laws of learning set forth by Professor E.L.Thorndike are a case in point. These are the laws of Readiness, Exercise, and Effort:

(1) Where there is willingness; i.e., readiness to learn - it is much easier.
(2) Where there is an adequate amount of meaningful repetition, learning is more lasting.
(3) If learning is satisfying, we are more inclined to repeat the activity.

Here again, the common factor among all three is personal involvment ! You exercise control over these activities: You must decide they are important: You must make the effort. No magic formula (without personal effort) will change you from an 'unlearned' to a 'learned' individual !

Among the many techniques for learning improvement, probably the single most important one is To Distribute Your Learning. This simply means that a re-study

or review should be done at regular and frequent intervals. That is, instead of waiting to study or review for the test the night before, it should be done at regular intervals before the test. Studies have clearly shown that this will actually save considerable time. The importance of observing this principle cannot be urged upon you too strongly: It Will Spare You Much Anxiety !

B;- BETTER READING PAYS RICH DIVIDENDS

As you continue your education, one of the most important activities that must occupy your time is silent reading. If you guilty of the following faults, correct them - now !

(1) Eye movements: Better readers proceed across the page by making a few pauses; perhaps three or four per line. These are called 'fixations', and the fewer fixations per line, the more rapid the reading. Some readers immediately re-read something to try to comprehend an item they missed. This 'regression', as it is called, causes even more fixations and further slows the reading pace.

Movement of the eyes is a motor adjustment. Therefore reading is in large measure a matter of developing the proper motor habits; i.e., decreasing the number of fixations per line and the length of the fixation time.

(2) Lip movements: Some people have developed the habit of vocalizing each word they read. When we realize that words can be seen by the eye much more rapidly than they can be pronounced, then it is easily understood why lip movements retard the speed of reading. If you wish to note how great this difference may be, read this page silently and then aloud, keeping an accurate record of the elapsed time each way.

The habit of vocalizing, as lip reading is called, has been developed in the same way as other habits. It can be overcome by a conscious and persistent effort. Needless to say, the speed of reading can be improved by eliminating this habit. The benefits derived are well worth the effort expended.

(3) Vocabulary: As people speak, read, and listen, they build up a vocabulary. The more adequate the vocabulary, the more rapid the reading and the greater the comprehension. Speed and comprehension also go hand in hand, the faster readers retaining more of what they read.

(4) Interest: The importance of interest should not be under-estimated. If a student is truly interested in a subject, the reading is easier. Disinterest can build up a wall against learning that is difficult to surmount.

C:- BETTER CLASS NOTES YIELD BETTER GRADES

In order to take 'good' notes, a student should be aware of and consciously practice some fundamental principles;

(1) Keep your thinking clear: If you have observed the thinking process carefully you have noticed that thoughts tend to follow each other in a sequence , not just helter-skelter. Apply this principle when you take lecture notes. Focus attention on the lecturer. Concentrate as much as you can. Try to 'spot' the ideas he considers important. Then get the heart of these ideas down on paper. In short - be alert ! Stay awake ! Think !

(2) Make notes brief: Don't attempt to write down everything the instructors say. Look for information that involves: 'who', 'what', 'where', 'when'. This type of information should be noted as briefly as possible. Abbeviate. If you know that wonderful device - shorthand - use it ! Then, as soon as possible after the lecture, your notes may be rewritten - in fuller detail. This serves two purposes: (1) adding to the accuracy and completeness of your notes, and (2) serving as a learning device, as it affords you an opportunity for restudy or reviewing your notes. This latter function is most important, as a solution to forgetting that learning is "distributed learning".

(3) Learn to be exact: If you give the answer "37" to the multiplication problem 4 x 9, you would be wrong; i.e., inexact. Such inexactness can be very costly in test errors. Exactness on your part will depend so much on how well you hear and understand , and will be reflected in large measure in the quality (i.e., accuracy or exactness) of the notes you take. Be alert ! Be careful ! Concentrate !

(4) Listen for learning: Someone once said, "Learn to listen, then listen to learn". This demands concentrated effort for one can 'hear' without listening - or learning ! When you 'listen' you notice the points of emphasis made by the

instructor. These are of great importance in note taking, for very often these are the items appearing on future tests and examinations. So - a word to the wise should be sufficient: learn to listen by concentrating on listening, not just 'hearing' ! Concentrate ! Think !

1:- Preparing for exams

Many students are upset by the assignment of an examination. Yet - if you have worked along all term, you have no need to fear exams, provided - of course - that you exercise common sense.

Please note again - this is something that you must do. Not the instructor; not the school; not the textbook author - but you ! Others cannot in any way replace the self-disciplined effort and control you must exercise in order to achieve the results of studying efficiently.

Examinations are not contests between students and teachers with one trying to outwit the other. Examinations should be, and can be, a cooperative learning experience.

In preparing for exams you can materially help or hinder yourself in giving a fair account of your knowledge of the subject. Consider carefully the following 'do's' and 'don't's':

(1) Don't 'cram'

Some students fail to keep current in their studies. They let their so-called 'studying' go to the last moment. Then they 'cram', hoping that through this quick 'look-see' they will absorb enough correct information to pass the test. The pressure and tension in this last minute, so-called 'preparation' can too easily get them into an emotional state which can, and does, block their memories. No one should expect to do his/her best if she/he walks into a test haggard and fatigued from cramming the night before, and often without having eaten properly ! Examinations demand a clear head, and neglecting one's physical health will not produce a clear head !

Learning should be spaced out as much as possible throughout the term.. This way you actually learn and retain more if you distribute your practice periods. Learning reviews are also necessary , and the final review should occur as close to the test date as possible , because the more recently you have learned something, the less likely you are to forget it quickly.

(2) Practice the kind of thing you will do during the test

Most tests consist of questions to be answered, either essays or objective items. Make up practice questions to be answered. This is the simplest and best way to prepare for an examination.

Concentrate first on vocabulary; next, basic facts; then, general principles and applications. But above all - use some form of recitation. DO NOT just read and reread.

(3) Space your reviews

Do not revieww subjects that are similar to each other one right after the other. Use short rest periods, (10 to 15 minutes) , in between changes from one subject to another. DO NOT reverse the process by doing a little study between rest periods.

(4) Review tests that have been returned to you

Analyze your mistakes and concentrate your preparation in your areas of weakness and deficiencies. Note particularly the careless or hasty omission of words which may have resulted in "incorrect" answers. Avoid such errors in the future by carefully reading through the test after you complete it.

2:- Taking Exams

It is very important for you to become skilled in taking exams. It is unfortunately true that many students carefully study and review only to lose all the benefits of these efforts because they do not know how to take tests !

By following the suggestions in this section you can add points to your test scores. More importantly, you will have the satisfaction of receiving the

grades you deserve for the time and effort you have devoted to preparing for exams.

Honestly - it is really true - taking exams can be pleasurable ! Here are a few 'pointers':

(1) Be there on time - prepared ! Have your pencils, pens, erasers ready. You have a job to do. Be prepared (in your attitude !) to do your best.

(2) Read the test instructions - carefully ! Are the questions to be answered in any particular order ? How many ? Follow directions exactly - don't ad-lib ! Notice whether you will be penalized for wrong answers. Some instructors 'score' by subtracting the number of wrong answers from the number of right answers. This most particularly means you must be particularly careful about 'guessing' the answers !

(3) Budget your time. How many questions are to be answered ? How long is the examination period ? Plan to 'save' some time at the end to check over your answers to avoid careless errors of omission, spelling, grammer, or arithmetic.

(4) Do the easier questions first. Answer first all questions of which you are certain, leaving out the doubtful ones for qa second reading. 'Easy' questions count as much as the more difficult ones, and you will want to complete - correctly - as many easy ones as possible. This will save you considerable time for working on the more difficult questions. It is also an excellent means for overcoming 'examination phobia' - a feeling familiar to many students !

D:- A FINAL WORD

To accomplish the most from your study periods, if at all possible, arrange your study hours to take place when you are mentally and physically 'fresh'. Avoid "low ebb" hours when you know by experience that you tend to be tired

In the final analysis - study results depend on how well, not how long you study. Always keep in mind - the mark of a good student is that she/he gets the most out of his/her study time. Do study efficiently and make your mark !

Now that you have read through this material, do re-read it - preferably several times. And when you do - be certain to apply the study suggestions it

contains. Good luck - and good, efficient studying !

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Answers to True-False Quiz

1. False. It should be used where exact memorizing is required, such as dates, formulas, foreign language learning.

2. True

3. True

4. False. Developing a 'good' memory is a skill that can be learned.

5. True

6. True

7. False. We forget less rapidly as time goes on.

8. False. The commonest cause of failure is poor study habits.

9. True

10 False. Not 'as pleasant and relaxing as possible'- just comfortable. After all - you want to study, not relax !

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